

Abstract of the Disclosure

5 An apparatus for a service node used in a multimedia network. The apparatus has a data distributor circuit, and a decoder. The data distributor card has a data port for coupling with a data stream. The data distributor circuit has a relational code for determining whether an address field of a data packet of the data stream is intended for local distribution to peripheral devices by the distribution circuit. The decoder, in communication with the distribution circuit, has a virtual channel filter for filtering the address field to route the data packet to at least one data port, such as that associated with a peripheral device. An incorporator circuit is provided that is electrically-coupled to the data port to insert an address value having a relational code and a virtual channel code in a data input from the at least one data port. The incorporator then inserts the data input from the at least one data port into the data stream. In a method of the invention, interfacing a multimedia communications data stream having a plurality of data packets is provided. Inputting a data packet of the data stream, determining whether an address field of the data packet is intended for local distribution, and routing the data packet to a data port if the data packet is intended for local distribution. Otherwise, the data packet is returned to the data stream if the data packet is not intended for local distribution.

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